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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000272

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/09/2017

TAGS: PREL KWBG PGOV KPAL IS PTER

SUBJECT: INITIAL PALESTINIAN REACTION TO AGREEMENT ON
NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT

REF: SECSTATE 16453

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary. Palestinian political contacts all characterized the February 8 national unity government (NUG) agreement as positive, but expressed mixed views on whether Hamas will abide by its agreements and if the NUG will end Palestinian infighting. A Gaza-based PLO Executive Committee member said PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) must be vigilant with Hamas as the NUG is implemented. An independent PLC member from Gaza said she welcomes the NUG but expects some Fatah-Hamas fighting will continue, as both groups are more interested in power than effective governance. An independent Jerusalem PLC member urged international acceptance of the NUG, which he said will help end violence and advance peace efforts. He feared that rejection of the NUG will perpetuate a dysfunctional, two-headed government similar to the situation under former president Yasser Arafat. A Fatah PLC member from Bethlehem said a NUG will allow Fatah time and stability to rebuild, while preventing civil war. He said PM Ismayil Haniyah is a moderate who will not interfere with Abbas' political program or negotiations with Israel. End Summary.

Gaza PLO ExComm Member:
Guarded Optimism on NUG

¶12. (C) PLO ExComm member Riyad al-Khudari (Independent) told Poloff that the Mecca agreement is a good start for ending interfactional violence and Palestinian suffering, but he said the ExComm will warn Abbas to be vigilant to ensure that Hamas strictly abides by the agreement. He said Abbas told the ExComm he had agreed to meet Hamas leaders in Mecca to show: a) he is committed to a peaceful solution and an end to Palestinian suffering; and b) if talks had failed or if Hamas violates the NUG agreement, he had exhausted all options before calling for elections. Al-Khudari said he knows Interior Minister candidate Hamudah Jarwan, and that Jarwan describes himself as a solid Fatah member.

Gaza PLC Member:
Situation Still in Play

¶13. (C) Gaza PLC member Rawiya al-Shawa (Independent) told Poloff that NUG formation would be positive but is not final despite the Mecca agreement, as conflicts continue between Fatah and Hamas. She said she doubts the U.S. will accept the NUG, but noted that the new NUG could be superior to the pre-2006 Fatah-controlled governments, which she said were corrupt and monopolized power. The agreement should allow

the PLC to meet again with real substantive debate, she said.

She said her main priorities for a NUG are to pay government salaries and standardize crossings at Rafah and elsewhere, since poverty and GoI restrictions contribute to extremist sympathies in Gaza.

Jerusalem/West Bank PLC:
Positive on NUG

¶4. (C) Jerusalem PLC member Bernard Sabella (Independent) told Poloff that the international community should support the NUG, which he believes will help end violence and advance peace efforts with Israel. Rejection of the NUG because PM Haniyah remains in the Cabinet will perpetuate a dysfunctional, two-headed government similar to the 2003-4 situation when the USG dealt with the PM but boycotted former president Yasser Arafat, he said. He said Haniyah is an intelligent and moderate leader who will support Abbas and not interfere in negotiations with Israel or foreign affairs, but it is wishful thinking to believe Palestinians can move ahead on peace if Hamas is entirely sidelined. He said Hamas is moving closer to the overall Palestinian consensus on a two-state solution and should have the opportunity to live up to its agreement.

¶5. (C) Bethlehem PLC member Fuad Kukali (Fatah) said the NUG is a positive attempt to end the past year's suffering and violence. He said the NUG will give Fatah time and stability to rebuild, and prevent Gaza and the West Bank from descending into a "Lebanese-style civil war." He said Haniyah, unlike current Foreign Minister Mahmud al-Zahar, is not an extremist and will not interfere with negotiations

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with Israel or with Abbas' overall political vision.
WALLES